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Chairman:

Mr. MROZIEWICZ

(Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

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GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): I should like first of all to express to you, Sir, on behalf of the Tunisian delegation, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your talents as a great diplomat and your personal experience guarantee in advance that you will guide our work very well. I take this opportunity also to congratulate the other officers of the Committee on their election.

We should also like to express our gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Yasushi Akashi for his untiring activities in the cause of disarmament as well as to Mr. Sohrab Kheradi for his valuable assistance and his constant availability at the service of the Committee.

As has been stressed by previous speakers, the changes that have recently occurred on the international arena give us grounds - when all is said and done, and despite the different pace of development - for great hopes about a world that still needs more security.

The international community, with all its elements, is today more than ever before in a position where indifference is not tolerable. The commitment of everyone to the common task of ensuring a world where security, development and cooperation become major objectives for the future is now a responsibility that all of us must shoulder. And it is only by working in that direction - and that direction alone - that we shall be able to hope for a truly better world.

All of us want to share that hope, and the political will of States therefore remains a fundamental requirement for attaining our noble objectives

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

of disarmament and development - two essential elements whose close relationship becomes more obvious with every passing day.

As for the question of armament and disarmament, the history of international relations proves that the unbridled accumulation of weapons has always generated tensions and conflicts. The arguments that have been and are still being advanced to support the thesis of what some call the requirements of deterrence have only demonstrated on each occasion the opposite consequences of this principle. The manufacture of ever more murderous weapons and the race to accumulate the greatest possible number of them were direct results in past decades.

We are happy that since then many initiatives and decisions in the specific field of disarmament have been taken, because any action designed to free the world of its military arsenals can only benefit mankind as a whole. In my delegation's opinion, the encouraging steps already taken in this sphere will unquestionably generate other steps - provided, of course, the political will of States becomes ever stronger so that we can progressively remove the obstacles that have always stood in the path of general and complete disarmament.

In the statement by its Minister for Foreign Affairs to the General Assembly at the beginning of this month, Tunisia recorded with satisfaction the positive and promising steps taken in 1990 and 1991 in the field of disarmament: the signing in Paris in November 1990 of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and the signing in Moscow in July 1990 of the agreement in principle relating to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the United States and the Soviet Union.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

My country also welcomed the important statement by President Bush on 27 September last relating to the reduction by the United States of several types of short-range nuclear weapons and others deployed on the seas, on land and in space - a historic decision which brought an immediate response from President Gorbachev, who announced equally positive and praiseworthy decisions relating to the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons.

On another level, some countries, such as France, China, Tanzania and Zambia, have expressed their intention to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the multilateral negotiations on chemical weapons are about to produce results. At the same time, States signatory to the 1972 Convention on biological weapons, including Tunisia, have stated their intention to study possible steps to strengthen the means for prohibiting the use of these weapons.

We welcome these positive achievements and express the firm hope that other States will soon join in these efforts.

My delegation considers that the First Committee must focus its attention on the positive facts that have characterized this progressive movement towards international relations in which disarmament would be the cornerstone of peaceful relations between States and regions - relations which all of us want to be equal and mutually beneficial in various fields.

While we are happy to note the progress achieved thus far towards disarmament, it is none the less imperative that the Committee deal with what remains to be done.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

With respect to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to which Tunisia is a party, my delegation considers that assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons are an essential element of a fair nuclear-non-proliferation régime. Such assurances should be unconditional, not subject to interpretation and without limits as to their scope, implementation or duration.

Moreover, it is necessary in order gradually to eliminate nuclear weapons not only that non-nuclear-weapon States be prevented from acquiring them but also that nuclear-weapon States agree to negotiations on eliminating nuclear weapons, for horizontal, selective, one-way restrictions can only weaken the non-proliferation régime. It also goes without saying that it is basic that States not yet parties to the non-proliferation Treaty should agree to international requirements, which would improve the chances for international consensus in this field.

The 1991 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission entrusted its agenda item on the nuclear-disarmament process to a working group. That working group has already begun a preliminary exchange of views which, unfortunately, has revealed differences both on substance and on approach. Still, my delegation is convinced that it would be useful to proceed with this undertaking so that in coming sessions of the Conference on Disarmament a consensus can be achieved.

The First Committee should therefore urge that all due attention be given that question, a question that is rightly of great concern to the entire international community, particularly to non-nuclear-weapon States which continue to feel their security threatened by the existence of nuclear weapons and by the lack of will on the part of some countries to consider the question

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

decisively. We also appeal to the leaders of the two great Powers and of other nuclear Powers to progress towards the complete elimination of the world's nuclear arsenals, which today have the power several times over to wipe out the world population and extinguish all life on Earth. We need an international convention prohibiting the development, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons that would be fair and non-discriminatory and that would address both horizontal and vertical proliferation.

My delegation firmly believes that to achieve that goal we must also give all due importance to the prohibition of nuclear testing in all environments. In our view, a general and complete nuclear-test ban would enhance the credibility of a non-proliferation régime, particularly among the second-rank nuclear Powers and the non-nuclear-weapon States. The cessation of testing would also have beneficial effects on the human environment, especially in areas where these activities are now carried out. Even if in 1991 the amendment Conference of States parties to the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in all environments did not achieve the expected results, we remain convinced that the Conference should continue to act as a catalyst for future efforts.

The international community welcomed the announcement by President Gorbachev of a one-year moratorium on nuclear tests. We would express our hope that it will meet with the correct response from all other nuclear Powers.

While attention is focused today on a nuclear-weapons ban, the fact remains that there must be a ban also on all other weapons of mass destruction: chemical and bacteriological weapons. In a world where the

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

philosophy of peace and détente has begun to mark international relations there is no room for such weapons.

Tunisia is devoted to peace and devotes all its efforts and financial resources to the education, health and well-being of its citizens; it is a party to all disarmament treaties, conventions and agreements, whether with respect to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the prohibition of chemical and bacteriological weapons, or the protection of the environment, which along with mankind itself has been the main victim of arms proliferation and related harmful activities such as the use, stockpiling and testing of arms and the dumping of toxic wastes.

Transparency in arms transfers is a sine qua non for limiting the unbridled arms race, which poses a threat to international security, and my delegation considers that if rigorous control can, as we hope, be established under United Nations auspices it must be universal and non-discriminatory and must encompass production and export of all types of weapons and weapons technologies. The arms race is just as much to be condemned when it results from imports as when it results from local production or is promoted by the transfer of weapons technology.

A particularly disturbing aspect of this problem is the illicit transfer of weapons. In the view of my delegation, the clandestine nature of these activities has serious implications for the internal order of States and, thus, for regional and even international security. It requires vigilance and monitoring by the international community.

Although the general view is that the trend in international relations is towards bolstering international security at a lower level of armament, it is no less true that security and stability have other, non-military aspects.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

Thus, developments in relations between the major military Powers have improved the chances for the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts and have opened the way for a new world order that would replace the confrontation that has predominated for decades with an era of cooperation and understanding in relations among nations.

In that connection, Tunisia - a member of the Arab Maghreb Union, grouping the States of its immediate regional surroundings - is working together with its Maghreb partners to turn the Mediterranean basin into a lake of peace, harmony and cooperation. In that spirit, the Arab Maghreb Union has since its creation attached special importance to a dialogue with the European Economic Community and the four European countries of the western Mediterranean, in order to lay the foundation for a new form of relations between Europe and the Maghreb.

Tunisia is preparing to host the summit conference of coastal States of the western Mediterranean early next year, and it is determined to continue its work, side by side with its European and Maghreb partners, to consolidate that dialogue and ensure the success of that model of North-South cooperation.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

Thus, we believe that the major Powers and the industrialized countries in general can make an effective contribution to the peaceful development of the third world by defusing regional tensions and by promoting collective security and economic equity.

Based on our conviction that regional cooperation is a decisive factor in international peace and security, Tunisia supports all effects designed to resolve regional conflicts, including that in the Middle East, on a just and lasting basis. In this connection, Israel must today prove that it truly desires real peace in that region, so fraught with continuing and painful conflicts, by putting an end to its intransigence and its policy of creating settlements in the occupied Arab territories, including El Quds, and by renouncing its annexation of territories occupied by force, which has been condemned by the entire international community. The peace conference on the Middle East, which - thanks to the desire for peace demonstrated by the Arab side, including the Palestinian people and their leaders, and to the praiseworthy efforts of the international community, and most particularly of the United States of America - is scheduled to begin on 30 October 1991, will provide a historic opportunity for it to do so.

The major changes that have occurred in various areas in international life make us desirous of contributing as effectively as we can to the Committee's discussions in the hope that progress towards general and complete disarmament in all its aspects will be truly irreversible and with a view to preserving mankind from the scourge of war and tensions, to freeing substantial resources for development and to leading a truly interdependent world towards peace, security, growth and prosperity.

Mr. FLORES BERMUDEZ (Honduras)(interpretation from Spanish): Sir, my delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chairman. We are confident that with the benefit of your experience and well-known skills the First Committee will successfully discharge its responsibilities.

In the 1980s Central America suffered from the consequences of conflicts whose after-effects are still being felt and in whose solution the United Nations is now actively participating. Our crisis was created by the socio-political situations that prevailed in certain Central American countries, situations that then went beyond borders and created a regional crisis. The East-West conflict sharpened differences. However, with the changes that have occurred in the Soviet Union and with the restoration of democracy in Central America, the region is now beginning to proceed along a new path.

Integration and subregional cooperation are matters of top priority on the agendas of Central American leadership conferences. Our countries are now moving towards understanding. To that end we are overcoming differences in the area of security on the basis of the Esquipulas II agreements, and we are creating a new Central America united in freedom, democracy and development.

Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go in the area of security. In this connection, the Central American Security Commission has been engaged in negotiations since last year. As a result of the negotiating process the Governments of Central America have produced a scale of assessment to assist us in evaluating various military components, and we have established a single maximum standard for all countries of the region.

In order for the scale of assessments to work we must know each country's military capacity. The Central American Governments have thus agreed to submit inventories of their military capacities to the United Nations

(Mr. Flores Bermudez,
Honduras)

Secretary-General. In keeping with that agreement my Government submitted its inventory to the Secretary-General on 6 June of this year. Honduras hopes that neighbouring countries that have not yet complied will be able to do so as soon as circumstances permit in order that that we may achieve an equitable and just state of security in the region.

Within the framework of the negotiations, in June of this year Honduras put forward a draft Central American security treaty, which has also been submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General for his information. It proposes confidence-building measures among States, which include the submission of periodic reports on the size of armed forces and military budgets, information on military activities and contacts, and joint participation by military officers in conferences and training courses.

The draft treaty also entails certain obligations regarding the banning of irregular forces, arms trafficking, foreign military advisers, terrorism, subversion and sabotage, as well as prohibitions on weapons of mass or indiscriminate destruction.

Our draft proposal also establishes measures of cooperation and assistance in the areas of environmental protection and natural disasters, as well as in the fight against drug trafficking. It also entails the obligation to set up programmes to ensure the participation of groups trained in the theory and practice of the protection of human rights as a fundamental element in any democratic regime based on the rule of law.

Our proposal is based on the principle that international disputes are best settled by peaceful means and by the express renunciation of the notion of military superiority in our region. It calls for the establishment of limits on armaments and military personnel and sets up verification and

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Honduras)

control machinery for compliance with the draft convention. The proposal also takes into account the internal security of countries that may be confronted with domestic acts of violence.

My Government has supported initiatives to limit armaments and weapons of mass destruction with the same enthusiasm with which it participated in negotiations concerning security in Central America. In this connection, Honduras especially welcomes the plans being made by the Government of Peru to enable the countries members of the Rio Group to adopt a series of agreements on that subject.

Given the initiatives my Government has taken in the area of Central American security, my delegation supports the establishment of an international registry of arms transfers based on principles of universality, non-discrimination and transparency.

(Mr. Flores Bermudez,
Honduras)

On this basis, the register should include the production and stockpiling of both conventional and non-conventional arms, as well as transfers. We should consider the possibility of establishing machinery dealing with each of these three components, taking into account the fact that in the areas I have just mentioned the register should be established gradually.

Previous speakers have listed in great detail recent treaties and events representing significant progress in strengthening international peace and security. Of particular importance were the decision of President George Bush on 27 September to adopt unilateral measures concerning the use of force and nuclear weapons and the concrete, positive response of President Mikhail Gorbachev on 5 October with regard to the Soviet Union's position on those matters.

Despite that progress, there are still fundamental security problems relating to a global nuclear-arms ban, a nuclear-test ban and a reduction of strategic weapons. Such measures would guarantee lasting security for contemporary civilization. Peace and security cannot be achieved by a strategic balance of deadly weapons. Recognition of those facts is a categorical imperative for the preservation of our future.

Mr. WHANNOU (Benin) (interpretation from French): Like previous speakers, Sir, I wish on behalf of the delegation of Benin to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee for the forty-sixth session. I am convinced that, thanks to your personal qualities, our work will be crowned with success. I assure you of my delegation's cooperation. We also congratulate the other officers of the Committee. I pay tribute to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Nepal, Mr. Jai Pratap Rana, whose

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competence and skill enabled our Committee to move ahead in rationalizing its work.

My delegation is grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, for his introductory statement and his work for disarmament.

I also wish to pay a personal tribute to the memory of the Ambassador of Mexico, Mr. Garcia Robles, who died recently. Mr. Garcia Robles, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982, was regarded as the father of disarmament.

Drawing bitter lessons from the horrors of the Second World War, the members of the international community decided that they must no longer base their relationships on force of arms, but rather on respect for the rules and principles of international law and political dialogue and cooperation, in order to reduce the risks of more conflagrations, with incalculable consequences for mankind. In a short time mankind had experienced two world wars. That is why the United Nations has made sustained disarmament efforts since its creation.

Those efforts have been directed in particular at the limitation, regulation, control and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; the control and reduction of conventional weapons; conventions banning biological weapons; and conventions promoting measures to increase confidence, cooperation and security. The objective was general and complete disarmament, or, as Article 26 of the Charter says, the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments - for legitimate defence needs - of the world's human and economic resources.

Unfortunately, another war, called the cold war, soon started. Born of ideological rivalries, it was a war between the super-Powers for control of the world, a war marked by mistrust, confrontation between third parties,

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

giving rise to so-called regional conflicts, and a balance of terror, with the development and sophistication of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

During that period of East-West tension, not only did our world experience 150 regional conflicts, costing the lives of 20 million, more than 80 per cent of them civilians, but it also suffered the risks of a horrible accidental catastrophe for mankind through the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, hardship was imposed on the whole international community, and particularly the least well off, because military expenditures, being unprofitable and causing budget deficits, disrupted national and international economic structures. The disarmament process within the United Nations was therefore unable to make real progress, since the perception of collective security through disarmament was based on each Member State's view of its national security.

As the heads of our delegations stressed during the debate in the General Assembly, our Committee is carrying out its work in an international context in which confrontation and rivalries of all kinds are giving way more and more to cooperation, understanding and political dialogue, leading to hopes of the settlement of regional conflicts and the development of respect for human rights, whose flagrant violation and abuse preceded - even led to - the Second World War.

This positive trend in the international political climate has already yielded results at certain levels. In particular, there have been important, beneficial disarmament initiatives, which my delegation welcomes. I shall confine myself to mentioning only a few, as follows: the signing in Paris on

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

19 November 1990 by 34 countries parties to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of a Treaty on the reduction of conventional forces in a region which had been the theatre of ideological East-West antagonisms; the implementation of the American-Soviet Treaty of 1987 on the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces, and the conclusion on 31 July 1991 in Moscow of the American-Soviet Treaty on the reduction of strategic long-range nuclear arsenals; the declared intention of two Powers known to have nuclear weapons, and the decision of other States, to adhere to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the complete dismantling of the Warsaw Pact and the continuing reduction of the tactical nuclear arsenal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe; the United States proposal, followed by the positive Soviet response, to eliminate all short-range tactical weapons on land and at sea; the unilateral one-year Soviet moratorium on nuclear-weapons tests; and the Guadalajara and Mendoza efforts totally to eliminate from Latin America weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the hopes raised by the political changes taking place in the world, we were reminded by the Gulf war, where recourse to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was not out of the question, that mankind is still threatened by over-armament. In fact, the invasion of Kuwait by a Member State, in violation of the norms of international law, was possible only through the accumulation of arms beyond a State's legitimate defence and security needs.

Moreover, to maintain the peace, already seriously threatened by inter-communal frustrations in Eurasia during this period of transition towards a world order acceptable to all, our Organization must urgently take

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concerted, coordinated action to produce a treaty on general and complete disarmament, under strict and effective international control.

My delegation will therefore support any effort to put an end to the arms race in all its forms; to ban chemical weapons completely; to strengthen the obligations of States under the 1972 Convention on the elimination of biological weapons; effectively to control international transfers of conventional weapons; to prevent an arms race in outer space; to effect naval disarmament; and to prevent the application of science and technology for the qualitative improvement of weapons systems, and particularly weapons of mass destruction. We also favour disarmament for development and strengthening the specific role of the United Nations in disarmament, particularly through its Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, its programme of scholarships for disarmament studies, the World Disarmament Campaign, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, and so on.

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

More precisely, the subject of nuclear weapons, their proliferation, the threat of their use, tests for their improvement or manufacture are a source of grave concern for my delegation. The world has learned recently that even when countries adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to the IAEA safeguard clause for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, there are secret ways to build up nuclear military stocks. Thus, we demand the immediate total elimination of these weapons beginning with the complete cessation of nuclear tests. My delegation deplores the fact that, because of adherence to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, the review conference to transform the Treaty on the partial prohibition of nuclear weapons tests of 1963 into a total ban was not able to accomplish its objective. Nevertheless, following the change in international relations, such a complete and immediate ban would receive a favourable response given the new thinking on the policy of security from the defensive and interdependent point of view. Furthermore, while actually preparing a world summit conference to prevent the worsening of our common legacy - the environment - would it not be logical to go back to the review conference and try to achieve significant progress on the question of these tests, which also threaten the quality of life? That is why my delegation reaffirms its attachment to the ban on the discharge of toxic wastes, as stressed in the statement issued after the recent Pan-African Conference on Environment and Development held at Bamako, Mali - a prelude to the summit conference to be held in Rio in 1992.

Regarding work on the Convention on the total ban on chemical weapons - whose use is already illegal under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 - my delegation has noted with satisfaction the report of the President of the Disarmament

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Commission on progress achieved. We would urge the speedy completion of this Convention, which will have to take into account the complex and difficult aspect of verification especially since this weapon of mass destruction, commonly known as the poor man's atom bomb, can be developed in a simple fertilizer plant. Effective verification should be carried out by an international team which would improve its methods on the basis of experience in detection and identification accumulated at various levels and through the progress of science and technology.

International weapons transfers have always exacerbated social and political tensions and enabled authoritarian regimes to stay in power through coercion. Statistics show that 80 per cent of military expenditure in the world is devoted to conventional arms and forces and that the third world buys 75 per cent each year, spending billions of dollars while most of their populations struggle to survive.

For this reason, my delegation welcomes the initiatives taken by the five countries supplying 85 per cent of the conventional weapons sold in the world to control and even prevent the export of weapons of mass destruction, especially to such explosive areas as the Middle East. We also welcome Security Council resolution 713 (1991) imposing a general and complete embargo on the export of weapons to the Federation of Yugoslavia, which is being torn apart by national hatreds.

We need a set of international regulations covering all exporters and importers so as to ensure total control over weapons transfers. This must be accompanied by efforts aimed at the peaceful settlement of international disputes, as indicated by the Secretary-General, and at the protection of new democracies threatened by military coups.

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

General and complete disarmament affects mankind as a whole, but in view of the special characteristics of each region, we must also adopt a regional approach. The Disarmament Commission has already tackled this question and will try to elaborate measures for such an approach in the form of a recommendation to the General Assembly.

In the meantime, my delegation would like to express its views on the importance of the regional aspects as a complement to our global efforts, it being understood that both should be considered simultaneously in order to really promote the cause of disarmament. We think that the regional approach will be more effective and realistic because it will make it easier to identify the causes of over-armament in each area and to find balanced solutions. The continent of Africa, in the context of disarmament, belongs to the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Atlantic areas. During the cold war, we were implicated in all sorts of rivalries between outside Powers despite our devotion to non-alignment in order to preserve peace. But also we were within the range of various categories of missiles. On the internal plane, we have suffered from time to time from relations of mistrust, conflicts arising from territorial claims, ethnic disputes and risks of secession due to the Balkanization of the colonial era, to social and economic differences, to political injustices and to the policy of apartheid. Over-armament to deter aggression has plunged some of our countries into debt.

Hence, my delegation supports the creation of nuclear-free zones elsewhere in the world - the Middle East, South Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean. It also reaffirms its attachment to the denuclearization of Africa through the effective implementation of the summit declaration of the

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Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Cairo in 1964, supported by General Assembly resolution 3261 (XXIX). This requires the countries of the continent not to acquire nuclear weapons and invites South Africa, which has had effective and unofficial nuclear capacity since 1989, to adhere scrupulously - in the interest of peace and international security - to the obligations stemming from its adherence to the NPT and to the IAEA safeguard clauses for the peaceful use of nuclear weapons. This is particularly important since South Africa must evolve rapidly into a multiracial and democratic society in order to take its place once again in the concert of nations.

In the field of regional disarmament, my country, which is on the Atlantic, attaches great importance to the promotion of a zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic through measures which will increase trust and security based on political dialogue, cooperation and integration. We would like to count on the support of the United Nations, under General Assembly resolution 44/117 B, to achieve those objectives. In April or May 1992 the States in our area will hold their third conference, probably in Argentina, to harmonize their views on the environment.

As we have stated, disarmament is a political process whose objective is to restore peace and strengthen security between States, to establish a climate of understanding, trust and cooperation, and to avoid war. The work of our Committee will be incomplete if it fails to take into serious consideration the non-military aspects of disarmament: misery, famine, disease, poverty, drought, the precarious situation of refugees, desertification, the burden of structural adjustment policies, drug abuse, natural disasters and so on. In a few days these evils can kill as many people as the Hiroshima bomb and they obviously threaten world stability.

(Mr. Whannou, Benin)

How can it be otherwise in a world that is more interdependent as a result of the end of the bloc policy, where security must be indivisible? The world is threatened by a vicious circle of tensions and crises. Some countries may achieve security through disarmament. Others may remain insecure because of the weakness of their productive structures, making it impossible for them to gain a financial surplus for social economic investments.

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That is why, even though disarmament is costly, we must anticipate substantial disarmament-related savings to halt the deterioration of the socio-economic situation of the poorest among us. According to certain studies, hunger could disappear by the year 2000 if a mere fifth of world military expenditures per year were devoted to the problem. These expenditures give the world 556 soldiers per 100,000 of population, compared with 85 doctors. To reach this goal, the countries concerned must shoulder their important responsibility by doing as the Secretary-General suggests in his annual report. They must reduce the nearly \$200 billion devoted to weapons and, with the necessary financial assistance, convert their military structures and integrate them into the civilian economy. Without disarmament there can be neither peace, security nor development.

Now that the cold war is ending, the time is ripe for the Committee to place the question of disarmament in its right context. It must consider the three-way relationship between disarmament, development and security. It must move the process forward by means of resolutions and decisions that can be implemented by all Member States. The survival of mankind is at stake. The role of the United Nations is decisive, but it is up to each Member State to do its part by agreeing, if necessary, to limit its actual or potential military strength.

Mrs. URIBE DE LOZANO (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): At the outset, I want to express our regret at the death of Ambassador Alfonso Garcia Robles. In him we lost a fighter for the cause of disarmament who never quailed in the search for a better future for the world. For that reason, history has granted him the place it reserves for the great. We will miss him, but his teachings will continue to guide us.

(Mrs. Uribe de Lozano, Colombia)

Let me say, Sir, how pleased my delegation is to see you as Chairman of the First Committee and how confident we are that, thanks to your distinguished leadership, our work will go forward in the most constructive manner. We are pleased too that you have such a distinguished group working with you: the other officers and the members of the Secretariat, whom we thank in advance for their cooperation and hard work.

The world is confused by the international events of the past year, and many await with interest the response of the United Nations to the effects of those events on mankind: from positive changes to wars, conflicts and other human disasters. We do not yet know whether these changes in international politics which we hope will usher in a bright new century will really produce even minimal benefits for countries at the various levels of poverty. The trends of the past decade may continue: a few prosperous countries may become richer while others plumb new depths of underdevelopment; the strongest may acquire more weapons while those who understand that more weapons mean neither more security nor socio-economic progress will begin to reduce their arsenals.

From this session onwards, the General Assembly's work must be consistent with the end of the cold war and the advent of a new world order. It must reflect the intention of making the Organization a body with a greater capacity to respond to global problems.

One of those problems is the continuing existence of nuclear weapons. The motives put forward in the past for retaining, testing and producing those weapons have disappeared. Nuclear strategies are a holdover from the cold war and are incompatible with a new world order. In this new world order that we are glimpsing, which must be of equal benefit to all peoples, peace will

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depend not on theories of nuclear deterrence or on some countries' advantages over others but on a just international system in which the United Nations will genuinely play its central role in the maintenance of peace and security in a world free from the threat of war and the weighty problem of the arms race.

Even in this new era, a high priority for the United Nations is to avoid war, especially a war using nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. That responsibility continues to rest principally on nuclear-weapon States and on States most heavily armed. But all nations have a vital interest in agreements on measures to avoid such wars: we know war's catastrophic consequences for all mankind, especially for the inhabitants of the developing world - the site of all wars since the Second World War.

It seems that these words have been repeated time and again. But to clarify the problem we might risk being even more repetitive and say - along with the world literature of disarmament - that what we need to achieve disarmament is not simple formulas dictated by common sense or complicated formulas dictated by the most modern strategies; there are plenty of both, and valuable as well. What we need is the political will to achieve disarmament; the corollary of this statement is to be found in this Organization and in the contribution every citizen can make, particularly citizens who can organize themselves and make their opinions heard by their Governments.

Although the treaties signed to date by the nuclear Powers and the unilateral measures they have undertaken will not result in the total elimination of nuclear weapons, they are concrete steps in the right direction. We applaud them because they reflect the political decision to ease tension and manifest greater awareness of the threat posed by nuclear

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weapons and their proliferation and of the risks involved in their use in armed conflict. But those armed Powers must rethink the merits of retaining nuclear weapons and replacing obsolete weapons with more modern ones; above all, they must ponder the very existence of those weapons and their possible consequences for the peoples of the world.

The Gulf war highlighted many of those dangers, including the danger of a conventional war escalating into a war using weapons of mass destruction. For instance, we must not view as a mere anecdotal episode of the Gulf war the results of a television survey carried out during the toughest days of the war, on whether or not nuclear weapons should be used in that region: 65 per cent said they should. That should at least make us reflect on militarization's psychological effects on society.

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There is nothing irrelevant about our unwillingness to accept the possibility that those missiles which we could watch hitting targets in all directions, some on television and many others in awful reality, could be armed with weapons of mass destruction. Nor is there anything irrelevant about the horror with which the world witnessed the disastrous effects of the use of more sophisticated, so-called conventional weapons - despite the fact that they do not discriminate between combatants and civilians.

Such events must not recur, and the United Nations is here to see that they do not, to assert the interests of the international community as a whole and to seek peaceful solutions to conflicts and to the problems of the arms race that continue to concern the world.

The countries that form the Rio Group believe in the need to revitalize and renew the United Nations and to ensure that the Organization will be better suited to meet today's challenges. In connection with the subject that concerns us here, I should like to enumerate the following elements in the proposal being submitted by the Rio Group: first, we propose that maximum impetus be given the peaceful settlement of disputes on the basis of respect for the fundamental principles of international law; secondly, we propose to strengthen the General Assembly and the Secretary-General so as to achieve a better balance of functions between the principal organs of the United Nations; thirdly, we propose to promote an understanding of the importance of multisectoral action by the system as a whole for the success of international cooperation aimed at the growth and development of the developing countries and for dealing with other issues of global interest; finally, we propose to encourage joint action to promote social development and to foster international conditions that will facilitate the attainment of social

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justice, for the benefit mainly of the sectors most affected by underdevelopment and structural adjustment policies.

As the Rio Group stated in the document it submitted to the General Assembly:

"It is urgently necessary that conceptions of global and regional security take into account the economic and social factors which affect them. The General Assembly is the appropriate forum for considering sources of insecurity and global problems which particularly concern the developing countries." (A/46/437, annex, para. 9)

In a recent speech, the President of the World Bank suggested that a third of the debt of some of the principal developing countries was the result of military expenditures. This raises questions about the purposes for which many countries have actually spent the moneys they have borrowed and about whether Governments, and particularly those of the poorest countries, have drawn up unsound lists of priorities or are improperly using the resources acquired for the military sector when they should have been used for the purposes of social and economic development.

It is obvious that large military expenditures have exacerbated the debt crisis and other economic and social problems in developing countries, and the same could be said of certain developed countries. For there is not one single response to the assertion that the developing countries spend an undue amount to defend their territories from threats, both foreign and domestic, for one of the often-painful and difficult decisions each government is obliged to make is the amount of the resources to be allocated to national defence against the amount to be expended for the economic and social development of its people.

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Colombia maintains fraternal relations with its neighbours and has traditionally devoted a minimal portion of its budget to military forces and arms purchases. Nevertheless, the defence of its citizens and political stability in the face of problems with international implications, such as illicit arms trafficking, terrorism and the drug problem, have made it inevitable that greater resources have been devoted to strengthening the country's crusade against those scourges and making it more effective.

In recent years the spiralling rise in defence expenditures by the developing countries appears to have been halted substantially. That can be attributed to the depressed economic conditions in many countries and also to the multilateral efforts being made to reduce military spending and to the declining demand for weapons. However that may be, there exists today a greater understanding of the negative consequences of excessive weapons stockpiling and the paradoxical situation in which poor countries waste their resources for such purposes without attaining any greater stability or security in return.

It is clear that if we are to reduce or limit the arms trade, as with any kind of trade, we must reduce both supply and demand in order to free the resources devoted to weaponry and armed forces for purposes of development. Today, however, it cannot be denied that like some ironic relic of the old world order, there is increased pressure to sell weapons. Supplying countries that are economically dependent on the production and sale of weapons and cannot absorb their own production domestically and countries that have reduced their national arsenals either under multilateral treaties or unilaterally must now have recourse to foreign markets to sell their excess weaponry and maintain the viability of the military-based industries. We can

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thus expect that pressures to sell weapons by offering loans, compensations and other economic incentives will increase, given the sluggish and increasingly competitive market, unless some immediate steps are taken to destroy the weapons subject to reduction agreements, to halt excessive weapons production and to convert military industries into industries for the production of civilian products.

Today, the subject of international weapons transfers is an important item on the United Nations agenda, one that has acquired a particular importance as a result of the war in the Persian Gulf. We now know that without the trade in weapons that war would have been impossible. Similarly, other past and present conflicts would have been impossible, or at least of lesser scope, had they not been stoked by the transfer of armaments, which exacerbated them and prevented their prompt solution. My delegation hopes that the world has learned a lesson; it hopes that the knowledge acquired today will lead to a better awareness of the future, a future in which the commerce in weapons will continue to weigh heavily on poor countries and aggravate their problems if we do not fulfil our common responsibility to counteract its harmful consequences.

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Arming criminal elements, whether they be part of organised crime, drug traffickers or just belong to the underworld, cannot be regarded as a legitimate act in any country. States that still allow the illicit arms trade or do not prevent it, for whatever reason, must realize that it changes the constitutional order in the countries where the weapons end up and increases the vicious circle of violence, and in our country it hinders the peace proposals being made with such sacrifice and longing by Colombians.

On behalf of the Government of Colombia, our delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report prepared with the assistance of a group of governmental experts on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms and on the increasingly serious problem of the illicit arms trade. We enthusiastically welcome the report, which resulted from a Colombian initiative and resolution 43/75 I, sponsored by 20 countries. We consider the report to be an important step towards the responsible management by States of their arms transfers. In particular, it should encourage States to implement the necessary controls over arms exports and imports so that the arms do not fall into the hands of those involved in the illicit arms trade.

The Government of Colombia believes that we must create a keener awareness of the danger involved in the illicit arms trade, a disturbing phenomenon causing great suffering to many countries. We believe that the States affected by the trade should therefore send to the Secretary-General for publication and distribution information about seizures by the authorities of arsenals of weapons that arrived in their countries through illegal channels.

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Colombia supports the establishment under United Nations auspices of a system of transparency, universal and non-discriminatory, recording information voluntarily provided by States about the transfer, production and stockpiling of conventional weapons, together with any other relevant information that might help promote trust between States. We believe that such a system should be designed in a manner reflecting true transparency to help achieve the objective of reducing tension and building confidence.

Transparency is not an end in itself. To counteract the negative effects of arms transfers and the overproduction and accumulation of weapons the international community will have to take stronger action leading to a reduction in weapons to the lowest levels possible. It will also have to produce international norms regulating arms transfers.

A country's security and stability are closely linked to those of its neighbours. The desire for peace of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean and the support of our Governments for the essential principles of the United Nations have led us to take measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in our region. Now we must implement initiatives to bring about a true limitation of weapons and a reduction of military expenditures, to free resources to further our development. One such initiative, whose philosophy we share, is that put forward by President Alberto Fujimori of Peru at the first Ibero-American Summit, suggesting Latin American disarmament as a doctrine to be followed.

Of all the efforts made by the international community to bring about disarmament, regional agreements, or agreements reached by a group of countries in a region, are particularly useful in contributing to an atmosphere of trust. We support the agreement signed a few days ago between

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Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and since then supported by Uruguay, involving a multilateral convention banning chemical weapons. In the same spirit, we welcome the bilateral agreement between Argentina and Brazil to cooperate in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to sign safeguard agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

No less important to the promotion of regional and international confidence is the accession of South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the commitment announced by France and the People's Republic of China to adhere to its regime.

The convention to eliminate chemical weapons from the face of the Earth is about to be concluded. It seems that it has been possible to overcome the obstacles to banning the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, use and transfer of such weapons. We welcome the announcement by President Bush that his country will be one of the signatories of the convention, that it will destroy its arsenals of chemical weapons and that it will not insist that the convention contain a provision on a right to retaliate.

Our delegation hopes that the logic of the initiatives of the United States and the Soviet Union with regard to short-range nuclear weapons will be applied to the militarization of outer space, for which there is no need. Mankind will gain little if the threats being diminished on Earth are simply transferred to outer space.

The current session of the General Assembly presents a great opportunity. We believe that it is an exceptional opportunity for the nations of the world once again to sit down at the same table to discuss disarmament

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problems in a promising atmosphere. For many this gathering is no longer a forum for rhetoric, doing little or nothing to solve a problem - disarmament - whose effects are felt in every corner of the world; in some corners it has been latent and in others at times it has found expression in tragic events. We hope that our work during the current session of the General Assembly will lead to better possibilities of realizing one of the most deeply felt aspirations of mankind - real and effective disarmament.

National, regional and international disarmament actions require determination and imagination, as well as a humanitarian approach. The decision to disarm should affect all sectors and unify them. Disarmament strategies must include work to imbue all sectors of society with a humanitarian feeling, ennobling our work and at the same time resulting in a great collective effort, with human dignity as the cornerstone of international relations.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.